

MEET THE PETS

A Short Play

by

Tracey Jane Smith

MEET THE PETS  
by Tracey Jane Smith

TEASER

*Approval must be earned.*

SYNOPSIS

Nothing goes to plan when a player brings home a people-pleaser eager to meet “them”: Daisy and Mr. Cuddles. The pets observe a human date in this anthropomorphic comedy.

CHARACTERS

ALEX	A smart but insecure woman (20’s–40’s) with a strong need for approval—a people pleaser with a plan to break the self-destructive cycle in her relationships with men.
WILL	Alex’s new boyfriend—a player who has trouble with commitment (except to his pets), unconsciously seeking repeated validation through casual relationships.
MR. CUDDLES	Will’s cat (male)—wry, sardonic, passive aggressive, judgmental. A pampered, slightly effeminate aristocrat with a British accent who would prefer William all to himself. He wears a tuxedo.
DAISY	Will’s dog (female)—friendly, outgoing, high energy, a resilient optimist who accepts everyone unconditionally but doesn’t understand why Will’s new friends never come back.

SETTING

WILL’s apartment. First time he’s brought over ALEX. There is a couch.

TIME

Evening, after WILL and ALEX’s dinner date. It’s getting late.

PROPS

MR. CUDDLES’ book  
ALEX’s purse  
DAISY’s Frisbee  
Black lace bra  
Remote control

PLAYWRIGHT BIO

**Tracey Jane Smith** is a Central Florida-based storyteller, freelance copywriter and mom of two. Her short plays have appeared in Orlando, Miami, New York and Dallas. Community theatre is her therapy.

MEET THE PETS

*At RISE, WILL and ALEX are outside the apartment door. The rest of the stage is dark.*

WILL

You ready?

ALEX

Eeek! What if they don't like me?

WILL

Just relax...*(Beat)* Seriously, they can smell fear. *(With a practiced charm, he lifts her hand to kiss it. A beat, he sniffs.)* I can smell it, too. *(NOT his practiced charm.)* What is that—citrus?

ALEX

It's my lotion. I read this article that said smelling like *grapefruit* makes women look six years younger. Although I think it just makes me hungry.

WILL

Well, you sure *look* good enough to eat. Wow, I said that aloud—sorry. *(Beat)* Listen, Alex, I just want you to know, whatever happens tonight, I really like you.

ALEX

I really like you, too. But what will you do if *they* don't approve of me?

WILL

We'll cross that bridge if we come to it. *(ALEX nods seriously.)* I'm totally kidding. Alright, time to meet the pets...

*WILL opens the 'door' and turns on the lights in his apartment as he and ALEX enter. We see MR. CUDDLES cozy on the couch in all his feline glory. He wears a tuxedo and is reading a book. DAISY is offstage behind a different entrance.*

MR. CUDDLES

Well, hello, William. It's about time you returned home.

WILL

And here we are.

ALEX

*(Still awkward)* Here we are.

MR. CUDDLES

Here we go again.

WILL

Come here. Your lotion's making *me* hungry.

*WILL pulls ALEX close and kisses her. MR. CUDDLES watches with disdain.*

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MR. CUDDLES

Please stop, I may be sick. Which reminds me, I vomited in the kitchen. (*A pathetic aside, obviously seeking attention.*) No doubt from worry.

WILL

(*Caressing ALEX*) You know, I haven't brought many girls here.

ALEX

Really?

MR. CUDDLES

No.

WILL

Really. (*Nibbling her neck, or the like.*)

MR. CUDDLES

And yet...I am presently lying on a black lace brassiere.

WILL

I can't remember the last time I brought someone home.

MR. CUDDLES

Well, the bra's been here since Monday.

ALEX

You sure know how to make a girl feel special.

MR. CUDDLES

Trust me, new stray attempting to attach yourself to my William, you are not special. Only *I* am special.

WILL

(*Still seducing her.*) You *are* special. Why do you think I invited you back tonight?

MR. CUDDLES

To copulate. Obviously.

ALEX

Well, we *have* been together for almost a month, on and off.

MR. CUDDLES

We'll just file Monday in the "off" category.

WILL

We're ready to get to know each other (*suggestively*) even more.

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ALEX

So why am I so nervous?

MR. CUDDLES

Maybe because like the other strays Will brings to “visit”, you are an insecure human searching for approval not granted in childhood.

WILL

Just relax. *(Leading her to couch.)* So...Alex, this is Mr. Cuddles. *(Speaks in baby voice:)* Hew-woh, Mister Cuddles. Did you miss me?

MR. CUDDLES

I had to console myself with a three-hour nap. But I forgive you for abandoning me.

WILL

*(Begins petting/scratching/nose-kissing MR. CUDDLES.)* Dat’s my wittul kitty-kitty...

MR. CUDDLES

Yes, you may touch me right there. And there, as well. You may continue.

ALEX

*(Awkwardly, trying to imitate WILL).* Hew-wo, Mister Cuddles. *(Reaches out to pet him.)*

MR. CUDDLES

*(Sharply, raises a paw)* Back off, interloper. Do not. Presume.

WILL

No hissing, Mr. Cuddles. That’s not very nice. I’m sorry, he doesn’t like strangers.

ALEX

It’s alright; he doesn’t know me. And he doesn’t see many strangers, right?

WILL

*(Realizing his own contradiction)* Right.

MR. CUDDLES

Nor do I entertain many lizards. Perhaps the one in the bathroom maimed itself.

DAISY

*(From offstage)* Will?! Is that you? I can’t get out! I’m trapped! Please, come save me from this torture! *(Whimpers.)*

ALEX

That must be Daisy.

WILL

*(Leaving)* I put her in the bedroom when I’m gone, or she eats the linoleum.

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*WILL exits. After an awkward stare-down, MR. CUDDLES knocks ALEX's purse onto the ground. She tentatively sits on the couch, away from him.*

MR. CUDDLES

Did I give you permission to join me on the sofa?

ALEX

*(Softly:)* Hi.

MR. CUDDLES

It was a rhetorical question.

*Quick beat as ALEX smiles, clueless to MR. CUDDLES' disdain.*

MR. CUDDLES

The answer was no.

ALEX

*(Tentatively extends her hand.)* Nice Mr. Cuddles. You want to smell my hand?

MR. CUDDLES

Fine. I shall smell your hand. But, please do not be encouraged, for I am merely gathering information. With which to destroy you.

ALEX

Do you smell *my* kitty? That's Madame Fur Elise.

MR. CUDDLES

Whom you willfully deserted to come here. *(Sniffs again)* After soaking her in an abhorrent concoction of tropical fruit. *(Turns head away).*

*DAISY bounds in, speaking very fast as she runs around and jumps on ALEX, who pets her and tries to gently keep DAISY from scratching her.*

DAISY

I'm FREE! Oh my Dog, I'm so excited! And you're a NEW PERSON! I LOVE NEW PEOPLE!

ALEX

Well, hello there, big girl.

DAISY

I mean, I love *all* people, but new people smell DIFFERENT! *(Sniffs ALEX)* And different is so...EXCITING! *(A clumsy hug, sniffs again, makes a funny face, aside)* What is that, citrus?!

WILL

Daisy, no jumping. *(Pulls DAISY off ALEX.)*

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DAISY

*(Still hyper)* This is Will. Do you know Will? Oh, you must if he let you in. I wish he'd let the UPS guy in... *(Jumps onto couch. Beat, desperate, looks out)* Just once.

WILL

Daisy, down! You know you're not allowed on the couch.

DAISY

*(To WILL)* Oh, you don't like that. *(Temporarily ashamed)* I'm sorry. *(Back to ALEX)* I live to please him, you know? I mean, I LIVE to please him. Is that wrong?!

WILL

C'mon, girl. Leave Alex alone.

ALEX

Really, she's fine.

DAISY

*(Pitiful puppy dog face)* No, really, I'm fine.

MR. CUDDLES

No. Really, you're pathetic.

WILL

*(Petting DAISY)* You're alright.

DAISY

Any friend of Will's is a friend of mine! *(Beat)* I love him. I love him so much it hurts. Do YOU love him?!

WILL

*(Pets DAISY, their faces close, and talks in his doggie voice.)* Who's my Daisy Marmaduke?

DAISY

I AM!!

WILL

You are! Are you my good girl?

DAISY

YES!

WILL

Are you my good girl? *(Affirmative soft 'Yesses 'Uh-huh's and 'That's right' underneath.)*

DAISY

I'm your very good girl! *(Beat)* So please don't be mad that I chewed one of your new shoes.

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*(On a happy note:)* I only slobbered on the other one.

ALEX

You're so good with her.

MR. CUDDLES

Oh, yes, William, you're quite good at feeding her incessant desire for emotional validation. As you can see, interloper, he already has a needy bitch.

DAISY

Oh, hey, I almost forgot—the new person! Guess I'll just introduce myself...Hi. *(Sniffs toward ALEX's crotch.)* You're a girl, too!

ALEX

Whoa... *(attempts to nudge DAISY's head away politely)* No snacks there.

WILL

*(Admonishing)* Daisy...

ALEX

It's alright. *(Petting her)* Good Daisy.

DAISY

*(To MR. CUDDLES)* She said my name! Now I have TWO best friends! *(She jumps back onto couch. Beat, confused)* Although Will's new friends don't seem to come back...

WILL

Daisy, no! Off the couch. Go lie down. Okay, girl?

DAISY

Oh-kay... I'll go lie down. All by myself. *(Softer, seeking pity)* Away from everyone.

*DAISY sits and sighs dramatically. ALEX goes to sit on couch again but is blocked this time by MR. CUDDLES, who stretches out completely. ALEX rests on arm instead. WILL doesn't notice, as he looks for the TV remote.*

WILL

So. *(Grabbing the remote)* What should we watch?

ALEX

Whatever you want, I'm easy. Easy like Sunday morning.

MR. CUDDLES

Monday night was pretty easy, too.

*WILL moves MR. CUDDLES and sits on couch beside him, though it's important the bra is not yet seen/revealed.*

MEET THE PETS

WILL

Well, what are you in the mood for?

MR. CUDDLES

To be honest, ever since Downton Abby ended, I can't make myself care about the tube.

WILL

*(Browsing Netflix categories:)* We got comedy...

DAISY

*(Perks up)* Turner & Hooch! So funny. *(Beat)* Oh, except for the end.

WILL

Drama...

DAISY

*Old Yeller!* Wait, he dies, too. *Marley & Me?* *Where the Red Fern Grows?* What's with movies killing dogs?!

MR. CUDDLES

Good plotting?

WILL

What about...action?

DAISY

Ooh, *Bolt!*

ALEX

Sure. Do you like Iron Man?

WILL

He's only my favorite Avenger. *(HE gestures for ALEX to sit beside him on couch.)*

MR. CUDDLES

Iron Man is, of course, a fitting metaphor: The conquering superhero whose power derives from shielding his vulnerabilities with impervious armor.

ALEX

Who can resist Iron Man, right?

MR. CUDDLES

*(Contemplative)* Who indeed?

*DAISY walks over to MR. CUDDLES, sits or reclines on floor in front of couch.  
WILL and ALEX face forward watching 'TV' during pets' following conversation.*

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DAISY

Mr. Cuddles...? Why don't Will's new friends ever come back?

MR. CUDDLES

Daisy, Daisy, Daisy. You're so naïve.

DAISY

Aww, *(like she's touched by the compliment)* thank you.

MR. CUDDLES

I said 'naïve'. It's a euphemism. For *idiotic*.

DAISY

*(Oblivious to his insult, looking at WILL and ALEX)* I mean, they sure seem to like each other.

MR. CUDDLES

Must I explain everything? William brings females here to mate with them. Nothing more.

DAISY

Oh, wow. *(Impressed)* So he's a sire.

MR. CUDDLES

Not exactly. These women participate in the mating with hopes of a deeper relationship. Yet our William does not allow himself to be fettered by emotional attachments, at least to other humans.

DAISY

I don't understand.

MR. CUDDLES

Because you, my indiscriminate friend, are accepting of everyone. Knowing nothing more than a cursory whiff of one's hindquarters, you love without reserve or condition. This is your weakness.

DAISY

I just believe in treating others the way you want to be treated. It's the Golden Retriever Rule!

MR. CUDDLES

Nevertheless, before long, our William—whilst pretending to be engaged in the movie—will begin casually petting his new friend, perhaps touching her hair or pawing her leg...

*On cue, WILL makes his moves. ALEX starts to go along.*

DAISY

There's nothing wrong with being friendly.

MR. CUDDLES

Things will progress from there.

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*ALEX extracts herself from WILL's paws and stands.*

ALEX

I can't do this. I thought I could, but I can't.

WILL

What's wrong? I thought you liked Iron Man.

ALEX

I like the movie. Just not the moves.

MR. CUDDLES

Burn.

WILL

It's not like that. I'm just really comfortable around you—

ALEX

I'm sorry, I have to go. *(She begins to collect her things.)*

DAISY

GO?! *(Excited again)* I like to GO! Let's go OUTSIDE! Ooh—let's go to the park! I'll get my Frisbee! *(She exits to find it.)*

MR. CUDDLES

I don't understand what's happening.

WILL

I don't understand what's happening.

ALEX

It doesn't matter. *(Gathering her things)*

WILL

Seriously, Alex, I still want to get to know you. I'm not "that guy."

ALEX

*(Beat, decides to come out with it.)* Look, Will, I know you're a player.

WILL

What? No—

DAISY

*(Returns with a Frisbee.)* Hey, Will, there was vomit in the kitchen. I cleaned it up for you.

MR. CUDDLES

Daisy, whilst you were out, William said you're allowed to sit on the sofa.

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DAISY

The couch? Awesome! *(She jumps onto the couch yet again, still holding her Frisbee.)*

WILL

Daisy, no! *(To ALEX)* Please stay.

DAISY

*(Confused)* So you want me to stay.

WILL

I told you, girl, get down! Alex, no. Don't leave. *(Back to DAISY.)* Off the couch! *(Back to ALEX)* Just sit, okay? *(Beat, discombobulated.)* You have to believe me: I'm not what you think.

ALEX

It's okay; I knew it all along—about your bad reputation. But then I had this great idea.

WILL

What? Some sort of chick revenge?

ALEX

I don't judge you, Will. In a way, you and I are just alike: We both want *one thing*.

MR. CUDDLES

So you admit you're a strumpet.

ALEX

We both want people to *like* us. In fact, I'm so afraid of people *not* liking me, I never really let myself get close to anyone, you know?

WILL

Yeah, that's... *(realizing this may be his core problem, too)* pretty messed up.

ALEX

Then I read this article that said the only way to get over a fear was to allow yourself to experience it.

DAISY

I'm so confused.

WILL

I'm so confused. *(Beat)* Was this the same article about the *grapefruit*?

MR. CUDDLES

The player and the people-pleaser, both driven by their insatiable appetite for acceptance. Yet another reason felines are the superior species: We require no approval but our own.

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ALEX

I figured if I went out with *you*, I'd get the whole rejection thing over with quickly. And then I'd be cured!

WILL

So you were going to just *use me*? *(Beat)* Hey, it's worth a try, right?

MR. CUDDLES

Face it, William: The jig is up.

ALEX

I came here tonight, still wanting you to like me—even wanting your *pets* to like me. How ridiculous is that?

MR. CUDDLES

Not at all. *(Takes formal leave of the couch and presents himself to ALEX as he speaks)* And now that you do not seek my approval, I shall bestow it. You may touch me now.

WILL

See? Mr. Cuddles wants you to stay, too.

MR. CUDDLES

Well, let's not get crazy.

WILL

Please...Don't go.

DAISY

*(Tunnel vision)* GO?! Let's GO! I'm all ready!

WILL

Maybe we can help each other.

ALEX

Maybe. Either way, it's my choice, eyes wide open. *(More to self)* Should I stay or should I go?

DAISY

GO!!!! We could go for a car ride. I could stick my head out the window and let my tongue—

MR. CUDDLES

Daisy...There is a woman's undergarment on the sofa. Kindly deliver it to William's new friend.

DAISY

Sure, Mr. Cuddles. *(DAISY cheerfully takes bra to ALEX.)* I'm such a good helper today.

WILL

Daisy, no—

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DAISY

Is this yours? Here you go. Really, take it.

*ALEX takes the bra, holds it up for WILL and the audience to see.*

ALEX

This certainly supports my decision to leave.

MR. CUDDLES

And someone who's a 32 double D.

*ALEX drops the bra and pats DAISY on the head.*

ALEX

Thanks for the help, girl.

DAISY

You're welcome... girl.

MR. CUDDLES

Best wishes, interloper. Now get back to Madam Fur Elise.

WILL

I'll take you home, if that's what you want.

ALEX

I'll walk; I could use the fresh air.

MR. CUDDLES

Good idea. Maybe it'll help you smell less like Florida compost.

ALEX

*(To WILL, sincere.)* Thank you. I hope we can still be friends.

DAISY

You'll still be her friend, won't you, Will?

WILL

Yeah, sure.

DAISY

She's *my* friend.

*With a newfound self-assuredness, ALEX exits. Exposed and defeated, WILL slumps onto the couch. MR. CUDDLES comes over quickly to sit with him.*

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WILL

Well. Change of plans. (*Searches with remote.*) Who wants to watch *Homeward Bound*?

DAISY

ME!

MR. CUDDLES

I, too, approve. (*Cuddling with WILL as movie starts.*) Now isn't this nice?

WILL

This is good. I'm good. (*Consoling himself. Speaks in kitty voice.*) I love my Mr. Cuddles.

MR. CUDDLES

And as long as you feed me and clean my excrement chamber, I shall always tolerate you.

DAISY

Please may I get on the couch with you? Pretty please with kibbles on top?

WILL

Okay, girl. (*Giving in, pats couch.*) Come on.

DAISY

YESS! (*DAISY jumps on the couch and settles beside WILL to watch movie.*)

WILL

I love you, too, Daisy.

DAISY

I love you so much, Will. There's nothing you could ever do or say to make me stop loving you!

MR. CUDDLES

William, please focus. On me. A little lower. Yes, like that.

DAISY

I just love *Homeward Bound*. At the end, when the pets make it back to their family (*getting emotional*) and they're all together again, and the boy is so happy—it gets me every time. And best of all: not a single dog dies during the movie!

MR. CUDDLES

If you don't calm down, one may.

*WILL continues petting DAISY and MR. CUDDLES, a cozy trio watching the movie, as lights dim to BLACKOUT.*